

# Tale *Feathers*

May  
2006

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### *The Mississippi River The Audubon Campaign & How You Can Help*

May Joint Program with the Sierra Club

Mark your calendar for Thursday, May 25 at 7:30 p.m. at Litzinger School.

Dan McGuiness, Director of National Audubon's Mississippi River Campaign, will discuss this multi-faceted effort to build national awareness and advocacy for restoration of the ecological health of the 1,366-mile Upper Mississippi River and its 189,000 square mile basin. Its signature Audubon Ark River Education program and Great River Birding Trail have involved more than 40,000 people in 90 communities as it continues to build a constituency for the river and a base of river stewards taking action on its behalf. In 2006 Audubon is expanding the program to include the entire Mississippi River – headwaters to Gulf of Mexico.

Dan will describe how Audubon is working to raise awareness of the importance of the Mississippi River as an internationally significant resource by using Audubon's key tools: bird conservation and science, education and centers, and by helping shape good public policy. Illustrated with photographs and maps of the river and of Audubon's work, Dan will show you how you can also be involved as a "river steward" for the Mississippi River or any river near and dear to your heart.

Dan has directed National Audubon's efforts on the Upper Mississippi since the campaign was started in 1998. His 38 years of work on the River have also included director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission, education and program coordinator for the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation and the Science Museum of Minnesota and president and founder of an environmental consulting firm. Dan still lives near the Mississippi with his family in St. Paul, Minnesota.

This program continues a successful tradition of partnership between St. Louis Audubon and the Eastern Missouri Group of the Sierra Club. That means you will have twice the people to meet and twice the opportunities to discover.

The meeting is open to all, members or not.

Litzinger School is on the east side of Lindbergh, 1 mile south of Hwy 40.

Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

**St. Louis Audubon Society**

# Opportunities and Announcements

*Mission Statement  
of  
The St. Louis  
Audubon Society*

*Help our community  
sustain biological  
Diversity through  
Nature.*

*Goals  
To foster an  
awareness and  
understanding  
of birds and other  
wildlife and their  
habitats*

*To educate our  
community so  
people can make  
informed decisions  
about the natural  
world.*

## St. Louis Area Migration Counts

'Tis the season for migration excitement! Along with many opportunities to bird watch, there are opportunities to get involved and report on the migration status for the St. Louis area. The North American Migration Count is one such event St. Louis birders can participate in. As a matter of fact, birders have participated in NAMC since 1992, with some record numbers for St. Louis. The goals of the NAMC are to collect data on abundance and distribution of resident and migratory species and to report the migration results for a single date. This year's NAMC spring count is on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Participants spend the day (or block of time available) counting birds seen at a particular birding area and try to cover different habitats types. Data on birds counted during regular birding trips, at bird feeders, or during night birding are submitted to the county compiler. Some NAMC counts are scheduled throughout Missouri (check NAMC on ). The St. Louis area count(s) are listed here with contact information.

St. Charles County: Paul Bauer, compiler. Call (314) 921-3972

Email: [bauerbird5511@charter.net](mailto:bauerbird5511@charter.net)

St. Louis County: Zoe Geist, compiler. Call (636) 467-5030

Email: [dzgeist@charter.net](mailto:dzgeist@charter.net)

St. Louis City: Yvonne Homeyer, compiler. Call (314) 963-7750

Email: [homeyer@earthlink.net](mailto:homeyer@earthlink.net)

We would appreciate greatly if birders could "spread their wings" and help out. If you are interested in participating, please contact the compiler for the county in which you wish to participate.

### Evening Trip to Valley View Glade

John Solodar

A few years ago, when Mike Arduser of the Missouri Department of Conservation was a member of the SLAS Board of Directors, he invited the board to an evening outing at Valley View Glade in early June. It was a fabulous evening with multiple flowers in bloom including Missouri evening primrose, many good birds including calling Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-wills-widows, many butterflies and moths, interesting geology, a lizard or two, etc. An enchanting time was had by all.

Mike has agreed to do a repeat of that trip this year on Saturday, June 3 and it's open to all. The trip will start at 6:00 pm at the Valley View Glade parking lot. **Be advised that there is a fair bit of hill climbing involved although the overall length of the trail is not long.** We have listed this trip on our birding schedule, but it should appeal to many people who are not primarily birders. Valley View Glade is on County Road B between Cedar Hill and Hillsboro in Jefferson County. From the southwestern leg of I-270 take Hwy 30 about 19 miles to the turnoff to County Road B. Go south on B about 6-7 miles to the parking lot on the left.

## Birding Trips for May and June

John Solodar

**May 5-7, Friday - Sunday** - Field Trips scheduled throughout the St. Louis area in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Audubon Society of Missouri. These will include Tower Grove Park, Forest Park, Busch Conservation Area, Little Creve Coeur, Riverlands, Columbia Bottom, etc. See [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org) for details or watch for announcements on the MOBirds listserve.

**May 13, Saturday - Shaw Nature Reserve** - This trip will start at 7:30 AM as we are almost at the peak of warbler migration and want to utilize as much of the morning daylight as possible. It will be led by Connie Alwood. This is an all day trip starting at Shaw Nature Reserve and going on to Robertsville State Park. Shaw is a great place for birding with a variety of habitats and many different species. Robertsville is attractive for Henslow's sparrows in some areas.

**May 20 - Saturday - Little Creve Coeur** - The wet part of Little Creve Coeur is becoming so filled in that it is now more Marsh than Lake, but the birding here is still very good. This trip will start at 7:30 AM and will be led by Torrey Berger.

**May 27 - Saturday - Lost Valley/Katy Trail/Busch CA.** - Lost Valley Trail has been excellent for spring warblers in late May and early June for the last few years. It's one of the few places where we have had Kentucky, Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers all on one trip. We'll also try to cover the Katy Trail Access area and perhaps parts of Busch Conservation Area or the Blue Grosbeak Trail. Mike Grant will lead this trip which starts at Lost Valley 7:30 AM.

**June 3 - Saturday - Valley View Glade** - NOTE SPECIAL START TIME 6:00 pm. We anticipate a fabulous evening with multiple flowers in bloom including Missouri evening primrose, many good birds including calling Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-wills-widows, many butterflies and moths, interesting geology, a lizard or two, etc. Mike Arduser will lead this trip.

**June 10 - Darst Bottom** - This is a new area in St. Charles County that few of us have ever birded. Mike Arduser will take us to this area along the Missouri River. Meet to carpool at 7:30 AM at the Lost Valley Parking lot (directions below). This is necessary as there is only very limited parking at Darst Bottom itself.

**June 24 - Saturday - Lost Valley** - NOTE EARLY MORNING SPECIAL STARTING TIME: 5:45 AM. Mike Grant has agreed to lead this very early trip which will run from 5:45 am - 9:00 am. The timing is based on a remarkable morning that Dave Rogles had around

the same date in 2005. He had such good birding that we have decided to let everyone have a chance at seeing Lost Valley at this time of day.

### How to get there

Darst Bottom - See directions for Lost Valley, below. We must carpool from Lost Valley due to extremely limited parking at Darst Bottom.

Little Creve Coeur Lake/Marsh - From the western leg of I-270 take Olive 2.0 miles west to Creve Coeur Mill Road (White Royal Banks building on right). Turn right (north) and drive 1.3 miles to the entrance to Seeger Golf Driving Range. This is a small dirt road that goes over the railroad tracks on the left. Drive past the clubhouse to the two red barns in the back.

Lost Valley Trail - From the intersection of Hwy 40 and Hwy 94 just over the Missouri River in St. Charles County, take Hwy 94 south (the signs say west but you are going south) 5.7 miles to the Lost Valley Trailhead on the right.

Shaw Nature Reserve - I-44 west from I-270 to Gray Summit (Hwy 100). Cross over I-44 on Hwy 100. Follow Hwy 100 one block to entrance. (Entrance fee \$3.00 per person.)

Valley View Glade - Valley View Glade is on County Road B between Cedar Hill and Hillsboro in Jefferson County. From the southwestern leg of I-270 take Hwy 30 about 19 miles to the turnoff to County Road B. Go south on B about 6-7 miles to the parking lot on the left.

The SLAS Board of Directors  
wishes to extend a Thank-you  
to all members and non-members  
who sent in survey forms.

Your opinion matters!  
If you included your phone number  
you will hear from us soon.  
Thank-you for your participation!

The Board of Directors  
wish to Thank Mr. Anthony Page  
and Tony & Donna Page  
for their contributions to the St. Louis Audubon  
Society in memory of  
Mrs. Frances Marie Barnes



## Many Thanks Due for Annual Dinner Success

For the second year in a row, the Board of Directors agreed to "go all out" for our annual awards dinner. In addition to a silent auction, great food and a top-notch facility, that included finding a highly recognized speaker. We chose Dr. Carl Safina, past vice president of National Audubon and current president of the Blue Ocean Institute, because of his strong history with birds and recognized leadership in the even more far-reaching area of ocean conservation. His topic was his award-winning book, "Eye of the Albatross," which saw the entire room in rapt attention as Dr. Safina read passages that were at once thoughtful and beautiful. We offer very humble thanks to Dr. Safina for taking time from his very busy research and writing schedule.

The more than 120 in attendance all seemed to enjoy the food and hospitality of the Norman K. Probst Clubhouse at the Forest Park Golf Course. This was a last-minute change of venue that was handled expertly by Amy Milne and the staff at Three Leaves Catering. We also owe thanks to Pat Lueders for assisting with the change of plans and handling the notification of all the registrants.

The silent auction generated over \$2,000 to help fund local chapter activities and was made possible by the hard work of Dave Rogles. With nearly 40 items, some netting over \$2000, Dave more than came through with his first-ever silent auction coordination. Of course, the auction donors deserve special thanks and included:

Torrey Berger	Mary Buchanan
Jerry Castillon	Mary and Paul Dueren
Sue Gustafson	Susan Lammert
Pat Lueders	Bobbi Poor
Anne Rankin-Horton	Dave Rogles
Bill Rowe	Mike Thelen
Jim Wilson	Best Buy
Davie School Inn	Bed & Breakfast Home Depot
Jimmy's on the Park	Lewis, Rice & Fingersh, L.C.
OK Hatchery	Quik Trip
St. Louis Audubon Society	
Wild Bird Center of Creve Coeur	

In addition, many thanks to all those that assisted in making the evening a wonderful success, not the least of which included: Lynn Breakstone, Julie Leeman and the awards committee; Dave Tylka for his photography skills; Ann Earley and Bob Siemer for manning the registration table; Helen Berger for assisting Dr. Safina with the book signing and sale, and Torrey Berger for coordinating the entire evening.

Finally, we must thank all of you—those in attendance that night and all our members. All of you make all of this possible—your support, your ideas, your contributions and your spirit. It is that spirit of hope for a better future and determination to make it so that drives all of us when we volunteer for your St. Louis Audubon Society.



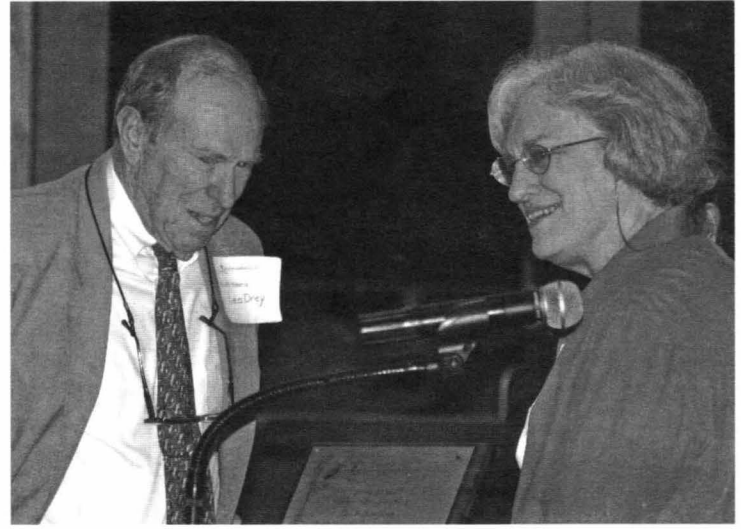
From left to right:  
Barbara Fraser, Outstanding Legislator, Pat Jones, SLAS Conservationist of the Year; Betty Kellerman, SLAS Education Award. Photo by Dave Tylka

The Bidding begins at the Silent Auction!  
Photo by Dave Tylka.





Mith Leachman receives his Volunteer of the Year award from Sue Gustafson.



Leo & Kay Drey comment on receiving the Robert J. Terry Award. Photos by Dave Tylka

### **Marsh Bird Monitoring at B.K Leach Memorial Conservation Area**

#### *Volunteers needed to help with this survey*

In 2005, St. Louis Audubon participated in a recently established program to monitor marsh birds at B K Leach in the Bittern Basin Unit. M D C has asked us to participate again, this time for the first survey of the King's Lake Unit. The goal is to measure the marsh bird response by obtaining an annual estimate of abundance and density for select marsh birds. Species to be targeted include: Black Rail, Least Bittern, Yellow Rail, Sora, Virginia Rail, King Rail, American Bittern, and Common moorhen. Data collected will also be suitable for establishing trends in marsh bird density and abundance over time.

The monitoring program will follow a standardized methodology developed by the USFWS. Thirty points will be sampled by playback tapes from levees. All needed equipment will be supplied by MDC. All points will be sampled 3 times a season, with at least 7 days between samples. Proposed dates for 2006 are May 20 (Sat), June 4 (Sun) and

June 17 (Sat) although high winds or steady rain will postpone the survey dates. Surveys will occur in the evenings, 1.5 hours before to 0.5 hours after sunset.

To utilize potential volunteers, this will involve a short training session (2 hours) followed by the initial survey of the bittern basin unit. The Wildlife Management Biologist, Brian Loges, will need a list of potential volunteers by May 1, 2006 to get things started. A minimum of twelve people willing to survey will be required to complete the 30 points in a single evening.

Loges is hopeful that area birders will be interested in tackling this pursuit and he looks forward to working with members of the group. Please contact Brian or John Solodar if you have any questions or comments.

Brian Loges, Wildlife Management Biologist

phone: 573-898-5905 or

John Solodar, Phone: 314-862-5294

## ANOTHER EXCEPTIONAL BIRDING TRIP TO HORSHOE LAKE

PAUL BAUER

On Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, our field trip to Horseshoe Lake State Park turned out more exciting than even I expected. In late March, we knew it is possible to find up to 20 species of ducks, based on the Seasonal Occurrence Bar Graphs found in **BIRDS OF THE ST. LOUIS AREA**. During my scouting trip on Friday, in mist and snow flurries, ducks were very numerous and 14 species were found. I ran into Frank Homes, and he mentioned locations for Common Loon, and American Pipits. Also Jackie Chain called Friday night to report Horned Grebes seen by her Thursday WGNSS group. Armed with all of this information, and the help of Pat Lueders, Mike Thelen, and Mike Grant as excellent co-leaders, I knew that we should do very well, with crisp clear weather in early spring.

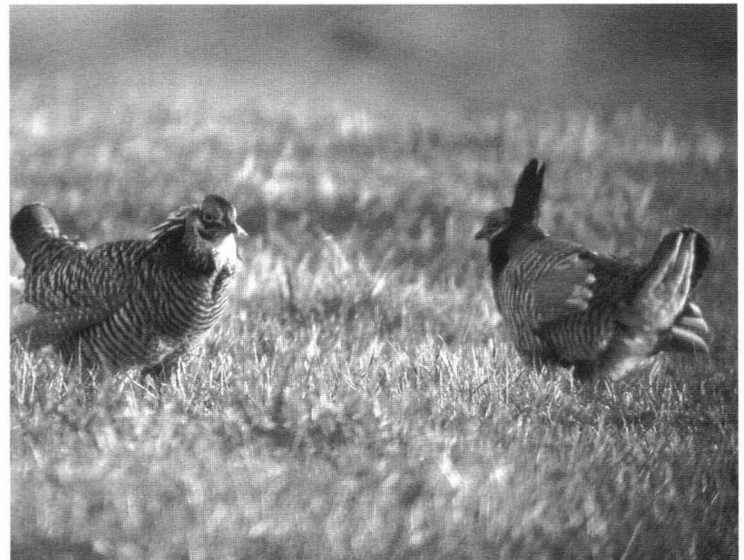
From the causeway we quickly found one Mute Swan with orange bill, and 12 species of ducks including the beautiful Buffleheads. At the end of North Shore Drive, several Horned Grebes were seen so distant that they couldn't be enjoyed, plus 50 Red-breasted Mergansers much closer. Next a side trip to check for a dozen American Pipits seen on Friday; sadly one 2 were seen by the front cars in the group. Returning to the lake at the boat ramp off of Hwy. 111, we saw very large numbers of Northern Shovelers and Redheads, plus several Wood Ducks (now 13 species of ducks).

Next we traveled to the west side of Horseshoe Lake with a side visit to the "borrow pit". We found over 500 Ring-billed gulls, 3 Herring Gulls plus one near adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (over a month late than expected). At this point this was declared the best bird of the day, not knowing that the best was yet to come!

Finally, we proceeded down Bend Road to the end of Layton Road and the sand dredge on the lake. Before we could get out of the cars, Pat Lueders found the Horned Grebes we had seen earlier. Now Mike Thelen studied these grebes in earnest: 7, 13, 17, finally 24 HORNED GREBES and 2 EARED GREBES which still had the winter blackish ear muffs. Mike made sure that several of us studied

them. Then about 25 gracious Bonaparte's Gulls were seen, and Mike Grant was digi-scoping a stunning adult FRANKLIN GULL with solid black hood and red bill. All told 53 species of birds were seen. Mike Thelen's trip report is posted on [www. Mobirds.org](http://www.Mobirds.org).

Our spring adventure was thoroughly enjoyed by over 20 birders. SLAS leaders always try to ensure that "Each Bird gets to See Every Bird". Be sure to join us on our next trips coming soon!



Pictures from Dunn Ranch Prairie Chicken trip are provided by Mike Thelen and Pat Lueders.



## A MOVING EXPERIENCE: OBSERVING THE GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN LEK

Pat Lueders

As our group quietly hiked up the gentle incline toward the blind at Dunn Ranch, anticipation grew as the ground seemed to vibrate from the deep booming and vocalizations of the Greater Prairie Chickens on their lek. Huddled together in the small blind as it was buffeted by 40 mph winds, the group watched over 30 male prairie chickens from as close as 20 yards as they continued their mating ritual that has persisted on the Dunn Ranch lek for an unknown number of years. Like the experience of watching the Sandhill Crane migration in Kearney, NE, observing the mating ritual of the prairie chicken undetected returns one to a primal feeling of being one with nature.

Dunn Ranch is located approximately 350 miles north west of St. Louis near Eagleville, MO. The Nature Conservancy acquired the original 2,281-acre Dunn Ranch in 1999 and is working closely with the Missouri Department of Conservation, Iowa DNR and other partners to restore a functional tall grass prairie. The blind is open by reservation daily during the month of April and a volunteer guide assists with the viewing.

A group of 15 birders from St. Louis Audubon had reservations in the blind Friday evening, April 7th, and Saturday morning April 8th. Forty mph winds on Friday and 30° temperature on Saturday did not discourage this hearty group! The group also birded MDC's Pawnee Prairie, Grand Trace CA, and Fountain Grove CA on the return trip. We saw 86 species including the Greater Prairie Chickens, a hard-to-identify American Pipit, Harris Sparrows, a Bald Eagle nest, and a flock of Pectoral Sandpipers. We seemed to have missed the Upland Sandpipers by one day. Steve Kinder, a birder and volunteer from Chillicothe, was our knowledgeable guide on Saturday in the blind and at Pawnee Prairie.

Other Missouri birders recommended that we view the prairie chickens at the Nature Conservancy's Dunn Ranch facility because of the opportunity it provided for quality views of the chickens on their lek. It was wonderful advice and we were not disappointed!



## Tale Feathers

*Tale Feathers* is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 2,500 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Mary Dueren edits the newsletter. To contact the editor, call evenings to 314-576-1473 or email: [mdueren@charter.net](mailto:mdueren@charter.net).

### St. Louis Audubon Society 2004 - 2005

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**Chapter Only Membership Application**

Note: To receive the National Audubon Magazine, contact the National Audubon Society for an additional application.

**Your membership dues will go directly to the St. Louis Audubon Society. Your membership dues support local issues that are important to you, programs at our general meetings, and *Tale Feathers*, our newsletter. Dues are \$15.00 per year and cover all members living at the same address.**

Please complete the form, enclose a check payable to SLAS, and mail to:  
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